

Opening Statement of the Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “The Race to 5G and its Potential to Revolutionize
American Competitiveness”
November 16, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome to the committee’s first hearing this year devoted exclusively to the promise of fifth generation wireless service, or “5G,” and to explore the potential impediments to its development and wide-scale deployment. It is imperative Congress tackle these challenges. This hearing is entitled: “The Race to 5G and its potential to Revolutionize American Competitiveness.” Let there be no mistake, the race to 5G is on across the world; and as in any competition, one can either lead, follow, or get out of the way. As Chairman of this Subcommittee, I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis to ensure America is first to the finish line.

The promise of 5G cuts across diverse industries and sectors of the economy. The potential benefits include: enhanced mobile broadband that can provide speeds that are 10 to 100 times faster than what exists today; ultra-low latency communications that are necessary for mission-critical applications like autonomous vehicles and remote surgery; and the massive machine-to-machine communications that constitute the “Internet of Things.” According to Cisco, there will be nearly 50 billion IoT devices connected by the year 2020. Taken together, the applications of 5G promise to revolutionize manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, city management, power generation and distribution, as well as law enforcement and emergency response.

As we gaze towards the promise of 5G, we must also be mindful of the impediments to its deployment. Potential speed bumps along the way pertain to the harmonization of international technical standards, the availability of spectrum, and the strangling red tape of small cell siting requirements at the federal, state, and local levels.

Importantly, we must keep in mind that 5G is only part of the communications landscape that will ensure our competitiveness moving forward. 5G networks will exist alongside LTE networks, unlicensed spectrum necessary for Wi-Fi, as well as

traditional cable and landline networks, fiber optics, as well as satellite technologies. Each of these will continue to play prominent roles as our nation transitions to 5G wireless connectivity.

Information is power, and history makes clear that countries with the best communications have the highest economic growth, and a distinct competitive advantage. 5G will play a major part in continuing our nation's leadership in communications. I am pleased to convene this hearing to explore the promise of 5G, and to examine the challenges to its development and deployment. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.